



Wyoming Game and Fish Department

Pinedale Region

November 2017 Newsletter

Early Hunt Seasons Slow, but Late Season Elk Picking Up

Pinedale Region game wardens and biologists report some of the slowest early season big game hunting they can recall. According to Wildlife Biologist Gary Fralick, with management responsibility over the northern Wyoming Range, the early 2017 big game hunt seasons have resulted in the fewest number of mule deer and elk checked during any one hunting season over the last 25 years. Gary and check station assistants worked a total of 11 check stations. The number of deer checked usually ranges between 100 and 155, and this year just 49 deer were checked. The lower harvest was somewhat expected with the significant winter impacts on western Wyoming deer herds this past year.

North Pinedale Game Warden Bubba Haley reported some hunters opting to forego hunting mule deer this year because populations took such a hit and concentrating on elk hunting instead. Wildlife managers estimate the overall deer harvest to be about half of what it has been in recent years.

However, Big Piney Game Warden Adam Hymas and Wildlife Biologist Gary Fralick both report that it hasn't been all doom and gloom with several nice bucks being taken again, and with the recent snows, the late season elk harvest is picking up.



Maggie Godwin-Bell of Lander sneaks on a doe pronghorn in Hunt Area 91 along the Southern Wind River Range northeast of Farson in late October.



(Left) Big Piney Game Warden Adam Hymas shares a laugh with an elk hunter in the northern Wyoming Range in early November.



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Boat Launch Work

The Pinedale Habitat & Access crew enhanced boat launch areas along Green River, Dollar Lake and Green River Lake. At Green River Lake, the parking areas and boat launch were graded and covered with new gravel and boulders were placed around the perimeter (Left and Lower Left). At Dollar Lake, Geo Web (Below) was installed. The Geo Web expands out and is filled with gravel to make a boat ramp. The geo web holds the gravel in place so it doesn't wash away from the wave action and allows people to drive on a firm surface rather than sinking into the mud.



Poaching Incidents

There were two buck mule deer illegally shot south of Pinedale in recent days. One was killed Sunday, November 12 along the Boulder Lake Road. Concerned citizens provided a timely and detailed description, which led to the individual being found within a couple of days. The deer was seized and the individual was charged with taking a deer during a closed season and shooting from public road. A huge thank you to concerned citizens.

A second buck mule deer was discovered northeast of Buckskin Crossing, off of the Lander Cut-Off Road (CR 23-132) near Long Draw. It is believed the deer was likely killed around Thursday or Friday, November 9 or 10 respectively. The buck deer was shot during a closed season and only the antlers were removed from the animal.

Anyone with possible information regarding this poaching incident, or who was in the area and may have noted suspicious vehicles or activities, is encouraged to call the Pinedale Game and Fish office at 1-800-452-9107, the STOP POACHING hotline at 1-877-WGFD-TIP (1-877-943-3847) or the South Pinedale Game Warden, Jordan Kraft, at 307-367-2470. Callers may remain anonymous and any information leading to an arrest and conviction may result in a reward of up to \$5,000.00.





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Tracking Burbot in the Green

Members of the Pinedale Fish crew have been busy netting and marking burbot as part of a research project to determine their population dynamics and movements within the Green River drainage.

Burbot, not native to the Green River drainage, were likely illegally introduced, likely forever altering this renowned

river system. Burbot are a voracious predator feeding almost exclusively on other fish or crayfish. Flaming Gorge, Fontenelle, and Big Sandy reservoirs

have seen dramatic declines in some fish populations, especially smallmouth bass. Native populations of some imperiled fish species, such as bluehead and flannelmouth suckers, also have seen drastic changes as burbot have become established. Burbot have been documented in the Green River just below the town of Daniel.

Fish movements primarily will be tracked through the use of PIT (Passive Integrated Transponder) tags that have been placed in over 500 burbot, so far. A PIT antennae has been installed upstream from Fontenelle Reservoir to monitor the timing and how many burbot move up the Green River. Managers are hoping to identify congregations, such as spawning areas, to target future removals.



A tiny PIT tag is inserted into the belly of a burbot.



(Left) A PIT antennae installed on the Green River to record when tagged fish move upstream.



Pinedale Fish Biologist Pete Cavalli holds up a sizable burbot captured in Fontenelle Reservoir and fitted with a PIT tag to monitor its travels up the Green River.

More Mussels

Pete Cavalli and Stephen Siddons spent a day looking for mussels in the Bear River. The highlight of the day was locating two live California floaters at Cokeville Meadows National Wildlife Refuge. This species is rare in Wyoming and is difficult to find in the muddy waters of the Bear River.





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Ridin' Fence

Pinedale Brucellosis-Feedground-Habitat biologists Jared Rogerson and Becky Fuda spent some time maintaining an eight mile portion of the Soda Lake elk fence via horseback recently. The fence keeps elk separate from cattle on private lands during the brucellosis transmission season when elk are dispersing from the Soda Lake feedground in the spring. The fence, along with numerous habitat treatments in the area, allows managers to terminate feeding earlier at Soda Lake than we otherwise could, thereby reducing disease spread among elk, which later reduces risk to cattle. The elk fence is over 25 miles long and is situated mostly along the private/public boundary from the Luke Lynch WHMA to an area north of New Fork Lakes. There are numerous gates and jumps that allow some wildlife to pass through. For example, each spring and fall, Pinedale Wildlife Biologist Dean Clause and North Pinedale Game Warden Bubba Haley open the gates during deer migration to facilitate deer movements to and from their winter range. The gates are closed during the elk migration, which make their movement on a bit different schedule.



Brucellosis-Feedground-Habitat biologists Becky Fuda (Above) and Jared Rogerson (Above right) cut fallen trees from the elk fence at Soda Lake Wildlife Habitat Management Area north of Pinedale recently.

From the Front Desk...

Pinedale Game and Fish Office Managers would like to answer a few of the more common questions they have been getting lately. 1) No. Soda Lake is closed to fishing November 15 through April 30. However, public access is allowed at the Soda Lake WHMA through November 30. For more information on closure dates for Game & Fish properties visit the website at: <https://wgfd.wyo.gov/Public-Access/WHMA>

Also, many area big game winter ranges on BLM land close Jan 1.





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Duck Creek Willows

Pinedale Aquatic Habitat Biologist Luke Schulz coordinated an effort to plant some 400 willow cuttings on Duck Creek, just outside of Pinedale on private landowner Mike Fenn's place. These plantings will allow biologists to evaluate different willow cutting techniques to determine the best procedure for the Pinedale area. The close proximity of the cuttings to Pinedale will allow easy monitoring and provide an excellent place to showcase this work.



Fall Rainbow Spawn is On

The Boulder Fish Hatchery crew is in the throes of their annual fall rainbow trout spawn. The spawn will take place every Tuesday into December. In the end, they will collect approximately 2.5-3 million eggs. Most eggs will be shipped to other Wyoming hatcheries, like Dubois and Tensleep, where the eggs will be hatched and reared. Some eggs are traded to other states. Ultimately, the fish will be stocked in many of the large reservoirs across Wyoming.



Nongame Fish Work

The Aquatic Assessment Crew along with Green River Fish Management personnel visited the East Fork Hatchery for a complete work-up process on all bluehead suckers, flannelmouth suckers and roundtail chub that were collected from Muddy Creek in 2017. Fish were PIT tagged and fin clipped for genetic evaluation. All fish determined to be pure will be re-stocked to the Muddy Creek drainage at a later date.

